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THE PROMOTION OF LINGUISTIC IDIOSYNCRASY AND ECCENTRICITY IN THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BBC

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One of the non-technical term for the speech is the BBC English, which is also referred as Received Pronunciation. Good pronunciation is very important for effective oral verbal communication. As it is known all the sounds in all languages are in permanent process of changing. Pronunciation of British English was once based on the speech of the upper class of south-eastern England, eventually formerly used as a broadcast standard in British media. It enjoyed status of being “good English” for several decades.

Nowadays more than 300 million people in the world speak English as their mother tongue, and many differences between varieties of English do influence the choice of a model accent that has traditionally been limited to what can be considered the two “standard” accents in Great Britain.

It should be properly described as English, rather than British accent. As well as being a living accent, BBC English is also a theoretical linguistic concept. It is the accent on which phonemic transcriptions in dictionaries are based, and it is widely used for teaching English as a foreign language.

There is no equivalent of Received Pronunciation in any part of English speaking countries: “The concept of RP is a peculiarly English one. Some linguists have argued that SE is better defined as the written form of English, on the grounds that standard English is not a matter of pronunciation and is thus not tied to any particular accent” [1, p.95].

Scientists, such as D. Jones, J.C. Wells, J. Gimson, S. Johnson, S. Jeffries, J. Maidment, D. considered RP/BBC to be an important issue to pay attention to. Gimson indicates the historical origins of RP that descend to the 16th century recommendations: “The speech model should be that provided by the educated pronunciation of the court and the capital” [2, p.280]. According to Wells, the British Broadcasting Corporation adopted RP for the use by its newsreaders.

Nevertheless, the BBC has never promoted Received Pronunciation as Standard English. As the matter of the fact, the RP was accepted by educational society: «The efficacy of the standard is not in the standard itself, but in the extent to which it is accepted. Speech that is up to this standard is seldom criticized” [3, p.57]. That is why RP often became identified in the public mind with the BBC English: “Only over the last 30 years, both the BBC and other British national radio and TV channels have been increasingly tolerant of the accent of their broadcasters” [4, p.82].

The British Broadcasting Corporation in addition to television and radio programmes has used the internet and phone-ins to undertake a national dialect survey on the use of regional dialects in England today. The BBC is considered to be the sponsored project, which takes issue with the correlation between RP and BBC English.

The BBC is fighting to disassociate it from any ‘gate-keeping’ role in language use: “It argues that fact that BBC news broadcasters spoke RP in the early days was more the product of a restricted group from which BBC employees were drawn rather than as part of any deliberate policy” [5, p.7].

The first regular broadcasts in Britain were made from Chelmsford in 1919. They had transmissions of 30 minutes' twice a day. The first radio program, that was BBC Forces Programme, went on the air on 7th of January. That was the beginning of the BBC Home Service. The main speaker was Jack Benny, well known to British people.

Eventually the BBC English became the model for English speech on a phonological and social basis. It consists of different speech styles and categorized according to the age, social class and status, situation. The term "Received Pronunciation" has connections with terms such as "educated", "BBC English", "Standard English" and many others. But by its nature Received Pronunciation is a linguistic name of an accent: "All descriptions imply value judgments about the social and educational status of its speakers, which have been extended to the accent itself" [3, p.72].

The British Broadcasting Corporation gained a great influence. It is good to remember: "... it held the monopoly for television broadcasts until the Independent Television Authority was licensed in 1954, until the Government permitted local commercial broadcasts in the 1970s" [3, p.55]. The BBC was the gold voice of Britain for fifty years. It brought news, information, and entertainment into every home. Also from 1927 until 1940, it developed a sophisticated system of broadcasts for schools: "... over 9,000 schools were listening to it regularly. By 1938, nearly 9 million wireless licenses had been issued in Britain (11 million in 1946), which is more than in any other country in Europe (in proportion to the population" [3, p.56].

Nowadays the term BBC English is used in three ways: "...neutrally, in the sense of English as heard on BBC news; positively, as the exemplary English of BBC announcers; negatively, as the accent of privilege imposed on the nation by a monopolistic and allegedly patronizing state institution" [6, p.375]. The accent was adopted by the British Broadcasting Corporations as the standard for broadcast journalists.

Today English emerges as a world language, universally embraced across the globe. Hybrid, local variations of the language appear, such as Singlish (Singaporean English), as recently independent nations promote their identity through local varieties of the language. There are also moves to standardise English used in key areas of communication such as air traffic control (Air Speak) and maritime travel (Sea Speak).

Speaking about BBC influence it should be admitted that it has lost its powerful prestige. Only the last three decades have seen major changes in the shape of the national accent, concomitant with the media becoming less middleclass dominated and oriented: "Nowadays the BBC has declared policy of employing a number of announcers with regional accents on its national TV and radio network. On the BBC World Service and BBC World TV, there are in addition announcers and presenters who use other global varieties. RP also happens to be the kind of pronunciation still heard from the older members of the British Royal Family" [7, p.241].

As we see, the BBC had a great linguistic influence on British English. It is considered that BBC accent became the Received Pronunciation of its time. The BBC had some influence of the development of Standard English. It became one of the examples of Received Pronunciation..

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